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CMAQ Project Selection Committee

Tuesday, November 30, 2010 - 10:00 a.m.
Cook County Conference Room
CMAP Offices

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chair -Ross Patronsky – CMAP, Marty Buehler – Counties, Larry Keller –

Council of Mayors, Luann Hamilton-City of Chicago, Mark Pitstick - RTA, Mike

Rogers – IEPA (via phone) and Susan Stitt, IDOT.

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Chalen Diagle, Kama Dobbs, John Donovan, Deborah Fagan, Laura Fedak,

Valbona Kokoshi, Bill Lenski, Randy Neufeld, Keith Privett, Tom Rickert, Chris

Staron, Dave Tomzik, Jan Ward, Mike Walczak, and Thomas Weaver.

Staff Present: Patricia Berry, Randy Blankenhorn, Tom Murtha, John O'Neal, Holly Ostdick,

Joy Schaad

1.0 Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Patronsky opened the meeting at 10:02 a.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

2.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

Chairman Patronsky clarified that the tentative next meeting was set for 10:00 a.m. on the 15th, not 2:00 as the agenda showed.

3.0 Approval of November 18, 2010 Minutes

The November 18, 2010 meeting minutes were approved with the addition of Lorraine Snorden of Pace to the attendees list, on a motion by Mayor Keller and a second by Ms. Stitt.

4.0 Plan Focused Program Approach

Chairman Patronsky kicked of the discussion recapping seven areas of general consensus and four areas for the committee to work on at today's meeting. He asked the committee members to confirm that there was general agreement on the eleven points:

- Programming should done to support the recommendations of GO TO 2040
- A five-year program should be developed
- Existing plans and programs should be the basis for project identification
- CMAP committees (Regional Transportation Operations Coalition and Bike/Ped) and ad hoc groups (transit, diesel emission reduction) should take an active role in identifying the coherent sets of projects
- The CMAQ Project Selection Committee should retain the responsibility for developing and recommending a program, and not simply assemble the work done by others
- Projects need to show significant air quality benefits
- Some form of call for projects should be kept

Chairman Patronsky highlighted the areas that were discussed, but not agreed upon:

- Setting goals for particular project types and corridors. The discussion revolved around identifying GO TO 2040 recommendations that pertain to transportation and how to make more concrete objectives under those goals.
- Whether to have the committees identify projects directly, based on plans and programs, or to rely solely on a call for projects
- At what stage in the process to evaluate emissions benefits
- Using the sets of projects to drive other funding sources.

The members thanked him for the recap and then turned to goals and objectives. He handed out a list of relevant indicators from GO TO 2040 but cautioned that these were developed for the region as a whole and that there will not be measurable benefit by indicator for typical projects or even groups of projects. He said that the indicators would have to be refined for use at the project level. It was thought that providing relevant indicators to the groups which are tasked with generating projects that implement GO TO 2040, would help focus them.

Mike Rogers commented that there are now two sets of goals – those for improvements that help air quality and/or reduce congestion and those that implement GO TO 2040. He said it is critical that we keep the air quality and congestion goals foremost. Ms. Stitt suggested for the part that is the traditional call for projects, sponsors should be asked to identify GO TO 2040 goals that their project addresses, along with the current information which sponsors provide. That suggestion raised concerns that the sponsors would not be familiar enough with GO TO 2040 and information on the project's relation to GO TO 2040 goals would not be in any measureable format. Ms. Hamilton noted that the indicator which relates to bicycle paths is linear miles – but density of development and type of land uses served would be more relevant for CMAQ. The Bike/Ped Task Force and the other program focus groups will have to develop a methodology to screen and prioritize projects.

It was clarified that the program focus groups would send the PSC a prioritized list of projects in their focus area that implement GO TO 2040 and are priorities, then the PSC will determine which of the projects make good CMAQ projects and encourage the focus groups to look for other funds for other regional priorities. The focus groups would contact potential sponsors for their projects to assure the PSC that the projects are viable (that they have a committed sponsor with local match, etc.). The focus groups could call for an "Expressions of Interest". A concern was raised that, if we utilize the focus groups for the pool of potential CMAQ projects exclusively, it puts the regional plan ahead of the mandated purpose of the CMAQ program. Some members thought that doing the air quality analysis first helps allay such concerns, but

others thought such timing was not practical. An alternative offered – was to do a traditional call for projects up front and then turn the applications in to the appropriate focus groups for evaluation against GO TO 2040 objectives with the ability to add to the project submittals.

Mr. Pitstick said that RTA staff had some ideas about using broader work type categories and said that he would send it to the Committee after the meeting. Mr. Patronsky said that CMAP staff did not include either "other" or "demo" work types in the first draft. It was agreed that, while the air quality benefits of CMAQ project are very important, reducing the magnitude of the ozone and PM 2.5 reductions is not likely to put us at risk for failing to meet Ozone or PM 2.5 air quality standards. Some members suggested reverting to broader CMAQ benefits analysis – such as looking at trips eliminated and VMT reduced. Mr. Patronsky noted that three of the four analyses (VOC reduction, trips eliminated, VMT reduction) are closely correlated; NOx reduction being the exception.

Mr. Neufeld who serves on the CMAP Bicycle /Pedestrian task Force commented that he felt the Committee's efforts were not in vain and that this plan focused approach created more of a connection between GO TO 2040 and the TIP. He thinks giving the focus groups guidance would be very helpful, and empowering them with the charge to figure out the relationship of each project to GO TO 2040 was excellent. He pointed out that this is a time of transition in how CMAQ funds are programmed and that maybe transitioning over the next few years rather than programming all five years, would make sense, especially in light of rumors that Congress will consolidate programs and/or will pass a smaller reauthorization bill than in the past.

Mr. Privett pointed out that some projects will have benefits in multiple categories and that the focus groups should look at projects of other work types being advanced by the other focus groups.

Mr. Blankenhorn commented that the CMAQ Committee will retain its role in programming CMAQ funds and he is encouraged by the progress being made today towards instituting "goal oriented, results driven programming" as promoted in GO TO 2040. He suggested that first we need to define what we are trying to accomplish and work from there; to take a hard look and define the problem we are trying to solve. Air quality is paramount, but we should look at the bigger picture. Later we can come up with objectives and performance measures; today we need to get clear on the goals. He asked the Committee to consider also using a traditional call for projects as a compromise – let the focus groups, which are comprised of experts, show us "where are the gaps in the system".

One member asserted that the application form can ask what GO TO 2040 measures are being supported by the project, but doing a quantitative assessment of that will be a huge staff effort. Mr. Buehler offered that alternatively the focus groups can assemble the best projects within their focus area, based on GO TO 2040 and the PSC can rely on the air quality analysis as in the past. Mr. Tomzik asked where the coordination takes place for doing something big such as projects that have components in several work types and it was suggested that Pace may want to participate in meetings of multiple focus groups that deal with various components: Bike/ped for transit access, RTOC for signal interconnects and the transit group for service improvements in order to support Pace's high priorities, establish that coordination, and find project sponsors.

Mr. Patronsky reviewed the benefits of "direct programming"- utilizing projects already identified in existing plans and programs and relying on the planning liaisons to reach out to the units of local government in their sub regions. There was a discussion on the varying level of specificity in plans; i.e. some bicycle plans have prioritized projects, others simply list strategies and/or identify a potential future built out network.

Mr. Patronsky said we could issue a call for project submittals through both the larger implementers, like the counties and service boards, and reach out to other agencies through the Councils of Mayors rather than the traditional call for projects. It would add value to have the project proposals vetted through existing agencies and the Councils of Mayors to utilize the planning and programming work that has already been done. Mayor Keller pointed out that while the suburban communities have similar problems, they are all different. There are a lot of reasons a community might not be ready or willing to sponsor and provide local match for a project that is a priority to some other regional agency. It may be difficult to get buy-in from smaller communities. Is it more likely that the communities would identify local problems and then look for "who can help them", or "what funds can they find" for the solution. Marty pointed out that the same is true with the 52 municipalities in Lake County and it takes partnerships to get things done. In Lake County, the County is willing to pay the local match if the local government will accept jurisdiction and maintenance.

Mr. Pitstick pointed out that someone has to actually fill out the application for each project with accurate scope, schedule and budget, identify the resources, and provide the data for analysis. Tom Rickert offered the opinion that without a centralized call for projects, we may overwhelm the focus groups and committees. There was concern over how much we would be asking these groups to do. We need to develop an application process that enhances our process. Mr. Blankenhorn said all criteria have to be measureable. Ross clarified that while benefits need to be measured that does not imply that everything has to be 'scored", per sé. Ms. Hamilton reminded the group that this analysis will have to be done at a "sketch level" as there is not time for more. Mr. Patronsky pointed out that there may not be good tools for even a sketch planning level analysis, however.

Mr. Buehler pointed out that there are three broad ways to approach this:

- o A call for projects and the evaluation of what comes in for both: GO TO 2040 value and air quality/congestion relief value.
- Work from prioritized project lists that the committees and focus groups supply, do the air quality evaluation on those that are eligible.
- Or a merged combination of the two, maybe a traditional call for projects, have the focus groups add to them and then CMAQ PSC could rank them all.

Mr. Pitstick pointed out it may be bumpy the first time, i.e. the Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee may be working off of a line on a map and have to decide whether to propose one long project or 5 coordinated projects with adjacent sponsors. Perhaps the focus groups should do their own calls for projects to get appropriate sponsors/projects. Another example brought up was the bike parking program established in Chicago; which is mostly strategy. Mr. Privett thought that if the bike parking program was funded, the specific sites could be identified in the project development phase. Similarly CMAQ could fund signal improvements without identifying locations up front. One member suggested that the focus groups could issue a request for

proposals (RFPs) asking for specific things that link to GO TO 2040 – such as an RFP for traffic signal priority locations/sponsors, signal interconnect projects or diesel retrofit projects.

The group considered options for a full call for projects one of which would provide guidance or incentives for projects that fill in gaps of regional systems, etc. Ms. Stitt, Mr. Rickert and Mr. Walczak expressed a concern that that there needs to be a way for the smaller local projects to be considered, even though the big regional projects should have a leg up. This could be accomplished through the PLs working with their Council of Mayors. It was suggested that the CMAQ PSC could create synergies in the areas that the region needs to focus. Incrementally the process could shift over to more emphasis on GO TO 2040. Mr. Donovan suggested that with the expertise in the focus groups and committees we could get systems of improvements. These committees and groups can do the leg work on coordinating with other project types and forming collations to get their priorities funded.

Ms. Hamilton suggested that the CMAQ Project Selection Committee might consider programming only three years in this first round of focused programming, while we work out the kinks in the new process. She noted that change is always hard and there is a lack of comfort on the part of most members regarding not doing a traditional call for projects. It was also suggested that what projects come in will establish how far to program out – we should not fill up five years unless the project submittals are very strong.

It was agreed that we should work on setting the goal and objectives, quantifying the indicators, matching them up with the project types for the focus groups and think of a way to collect the information we need to do the analysis. There were concerns that the RTOC is not well established yet and concerns that RTOC has a role with many project types. Mr. Murtha, staff to the RTOC, reminded the committee that RTOC's predecessor was the Advanced Technology Task Force, which is still in existence, and has a lengthy track record.

Ms. Berry said staff could put some ideas on paper and that CMAP staff has heard lots of concerns for the small communities. The PLs are well equipped to coordinate with the units of local governments in their sub region. She encouraged feedback on the proposal and said the CMAP staff would continue discussions with interested parties. Mr. Pitstick suggested that the committee consider having the ad hoc transit focus group be based on RTA's existing green transit working group.

5.0 Public Comment

Deborah Fagan of DuPage County, who identified herself as a long time member of the CMAP Bike and Pedestrian Task Force, addressed the Committee to voice her support for the concept of multi-year CMAQ programming with an annual call for projects. She stated that she agrees with the idea of utilizing various subgroups and committees to make recommendations to implement GO TO 2040. Ms. Fagan said she was interested in maintaining a mechanism to retain the local generation of projects. She said that viable projects depend on favorable community support, politics, timing, coordination and local matching funds. Deborah noted that despite good ideas coming from staff or CMAP committees, projects that have all of those aspects in place are most likely to come from the locals sponsors.

6.0 Other Business

There was no other business.

7.0 Next Meeting

The next meeting was rescheduled from Wednesday, December 15 to Tuesday December 14 at 10:00 a.m. at the CMAP offices.

8.0 Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Hamilton and a second by Mr. Pitstick, the committee voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Holly Ostdick

CMAQ Program Manager

/JMS